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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the importance of the preparation of qualified bilingual teachers and the need for certified, qualified, well-trained bilingual special education teachers. Specifically, it identifies and discusses competencies needed by bilingual special education teachers, discusses the need for reflective practice in the preparation of bilingual special education teachers, and suggests activities which teacher educators could implement as ways of developing reflective practice among bilingual special education teachers. The five major professional competencies for preparing teachers for work with bilingual exceptional students are identified as: (1) respect for students' language variety; (2) techniques and tools of student assessment; (3) understanding the role that culture plays in learning; (4) planning and delivery of instruction; and (5) the need for professionalism. Teacher activities that encourage reflective practice are described and include journal writing, narrative and story writing, and teacher research/case study analysis. (Contains 79 references.) (CR)

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ACCOMMODATING NEEDS of CULTURALLY and LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRAXIS

Paper presented at The Council of Exceptional Children/DDEL Symposium on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners
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The preparation of qualified bilingual teachers is the most important component in education reform (National Commission of Teaching and America's Testing, 1996). In an effort to improve bilingual teacher education, teacher educators are involved in the restructuring of teacher education, both content and process (Fullan, 1993; Ross, Bondy, & Kyle, 1993; Crawford 1997). Although there is a wide variety of research on teacher education programs preparing monolingual special education teachers, there is a paucity of research in the area of bilingual special teacher education (Fernandez, 1996; Rodriguez, 1997).

The demands for certified, qualified, well-trained bilingual special educators continues to increase due to the significant increase of linguistically and culturally diverse students and individuals with disabilities (Baca & De Valenzuela, 1994; Figueroa, Fradd, & Correa, 1989; Gersten & Woodward, 1994; Rodriguez, Prieto & Rueda, 1984). Current data are available indicating that Hispanic children continue to comprise the largest group of children receiving special education services, Nationwide (11.5%). However, of the total teaching force serving this Hispanic population, only 4% were identified as Hispanic in 1994.

Furthermore, many states are in the process of re-designing their credentialing process for special education teachers and particularly bilingual special education teachers. States with high numbers of bilingual exceptional children are exerting pressure on local Schools of Education to properly train bilingual special education teachers. Therefore the demands for bilingual special education teachers remains high. Yet, the preparation of bilingual special education teachers has lagged. Studies on the preparation of teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse students are alarmingly scarce (Artiles, Trent, & Kuan, 1996; Grant & Secada, 1990; Landson-Billings, 1995; Rodriguez, Prieto, & Rueda, 1984). Given that bilingual special education has become a central topic of discussion in the field of education, and that the United States increasingly reflects diverse communities with diverse cultures and linguistic characteristics, the need for trained bilingual special education teachers will continue to grow. Teachers and prospective teachers, need to be trained to meet the academic, linguistic, and cognitive needs of a diverse exceptional student body (Garcia & Malkin 1993; Sugai, 1987).

Through teacher education programs, prospective teachers acquire the necessary competencies to become successful teachers. Teacher education programs in higher education must provide adequate understanding of the influence of culture and language on the academic performance of bilingual

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special education classrooms (Erickson & Walker, 1983; Ortiz, Garcia, Wheeler, & Maldonado-Colon, 1986). Additionally, a dialogue among institutions of higher education, schools, state and federal educational agencies must begin. Furthermore, research indicates that utilizing a variety of interactive teaching methods, and training future teachers through these methods, allows teachers to better instruct students with varying learning and cognitive styles, which in turn engages all students in learning (Brown, 1973; Cummins, 1986; Dwyer & Villegas, 1990; Olmedo, 1992; Ross et al., 1993). Interactive teaching allows teachers to be reflective, interactive partners in students' learning, rather than transmitters of facts (Cochran Smith, 1991; Flor Ada, 1986).

The purpose of this paper is to (a) identify and discuss competencies needed by bilingual special education teachers, (b) discuss the need for reflective practice in the preparation of bilingual special education teachers, and (c) identify and discuss teacher education activities that develop reflective practice.

Bilingual Special Education Teacher Competencies

Rodriguez (1997) indicated that programs preparing teachers for work with bilingual exceptional students needed to develop five major professional competencies: (a) respect for students' language variety, (b) techniques and tools of student assessment, (c) understanding the role culture plays in learning, (d) planning and delivery of instruction, and (e) the need for professionalism.

Respect for Students' Language Variety

Bilingual special education teachers must enhance culturally and linguistically diverse students by acknowledging their individual language skills (Baca & Cervantes, 1989; Ovando & Collier, 1985; Trueba, 1987). The competency of language proficiency has been a crucial issue in the field of bilingual special education. Researchers such as Sugai (1987) and Brantlinger and Guskin (1985) stated that language is an intrinsic component of culture and it is a medium through which other aspects of culture, including the content of formal education, are expressed and transmitted.

Chomsky (1965) viewed language learning as cognitively based, emphasizing the innate contributions and abilities of the learner. Krashen (1982) believed, like Chomsky, that the language the learner brings to the classroom provides a strong foundation for learning and academic development. Cummins (1984) believed that the students' native language (cognitive and academic) proficiency facilitates second language acquisition. Cummins (1984) believed that the individuals' native language cognitive and academic proficiency facilitated second language acquisition.

Techniques and Tools of Assessment

Assessment occupies a prominent place in the diagnosis and evaluation of linguistically and culturally diverse students. Therefore, knowledge in assessment procedures is an important competency in the preparation of bilingual special education teachers (Rodriguez, 1997). Assessment is the process of collecting data for the purpose of (a) specifying and verifying problems and (b) making decisions about students (Ysseldyke, 1988). Assessment helps to gather information that describes how a person is functioning now and information that describes how that person has functioned in the past (Ysseldyke, 1988).

Researchers in the field of bilingual special education have agreed that linguistic and cultural bias in assessment exists (Artiles, Trent, & Kuan, 1996; Baca & Cervantes, 1989; Zavala, 1990). This factor tends to affect culturally and linguistically diverse students' academic achievement due to the misunderstanding of the role of language proficiency and cultural beliefs in learning. Therefore, there is a need to address this issue in the preparation of bilingual special education teachers in college/university programs.

The Role of Culture

Another important competency of bilingual special education teachers is the component of culture (Rodriguez, 1997). Bilingual special education teachers need to be aware that when language is a core value for a cultural group, it will also play a crucial role in the development of the students' cultural identity and self-concept. Cushner, McClelland, & Safford (1992) suggested that culture is a universal phenomenon. They identified themes of culture as follows "Culture as a socially constructed and dynamic phenomenon; culture as shared by a group that decides through process of interaction what ideas, attitudes, meanings, and hierarchy of values belong to that group; and culture as a set of ideas that is passed on the young as a means of nourishing the next generation" (p. 20). Culture is frequently viewed as a dynamic and evolutionary entity, which includes cultural elements and behavioral patterns that are subject to change over time (Hunt, 1975, Ornstein & Levin, 1984, & Weinreich, 1974). Culture is also viewed as a representation of meanings and values given to products, symbols, and processes that a group of people share and cherish (Andrade, 1984 & Erickson, 1986). The culture of a group of people includes all the system, techniques, and tools which make up their way of life (Seville-Troike, 1979).

The role of culture in the learning process of bilingual exceptional students, must be understood by bilingual special education teachers. Bilingual special education teacher college/ university programs must address ways through which future teachers could develop this competency.

Planning and Delivery of Instruction

One of the most contested issues in teaching the linguistically and culturally diverse student with special needs is related to the effective methods of instruction. Brophy (1986) explained that "the most consistently replicated findings link students' achievement to their opportunity to learn the material, in particular, to the degree to which teachers carry the content

to them personally through active instruction and move them through the curriculum at a brisk pace (p. 1069)." According to Brophy (1986) findings in teaching instruction states that students learn more when their teachers' presentations are clear and when these instructions are delivered with enthusiasm. Also, students learn more when the information is well structured and when it is sufficiently redundant and well sequenced (Brophy, 1986; Schunck, 1981; Smith & Sanders, 1981). Edmonds (1979), for example, discussed that schools that are instructionally effective have a climate of expectation in which no students are permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement. Therefore, bilingual special education teachers working with linguistically and culturally diverse students with special needs, must remain constantly aware of students' academic instructional objectives.

The type of instruction is an important issue in bilingual special education. For example most of the recommended instruction is "direct instruction". Rosenshine (1976) and Brophy (1979) defined "direct instruction" as an effect for producing students' learning of basic skills such as selecting instructional goals and materials and actively monitoring students' progress; and promoting extensive content coverage and high levels of students involvement. However, significant number of language minority students work in small groups and in individual tasks. Therefore, bilingual special teacher education college/university programs need to address a variety of teaching approaches to effectively prepare bilingual special education teachers.

The Need for Professionalism

Teacher professionalism is an important issue that must be included in the preparation of bilingual special education teachers. If teachers have undergone a process of training and have developed the knowledge and skills to deliver good quality education (Avis, 1994), they will be better equipped to deal with different student populations. Teacher professionalism must be viewed as a constant learning process to enhance students' learning and performance. Teacher preparation programs need to address the component of diversity and challenge (Avis, 1994). Hence, a reflective practitioner model must be in place in teacher education programs (Avis, 1994; Schon, 1987; Shulman, 1987).

Reflective practice is grounded on the knowledge base of teachers' cognitive processes - their thoughts, judgment, decisions, and plans (Shavelson & Stern 1981, & Shulman, 1986). This knowledge has moved the field of research on teaching closer to a consideration of the underlying knowledge that informs teachers' plans and decisions (Grossman, 1990). A number of models of teacher knowledge are currently being generated by researchers in this field (Grossman, 1990). Researchers at Stanford University (Shulman, 1987, Wilson, Shulman, & Richert, 1987) defined six categories of reflective practitioner: (a) knowledge of content, (b) knowledge of pedagogy, (c) knowledge of learners and learning, (d) knowledge of context of schooling, (e) pedagogical content knowledge, and (f) knowledge of educational philosophies, goals, and objectives. Prospective teachers need to be familiar with these processes. On the other hand, Elbaz (1983) included five categories of knowledge in her vision of "reflective practitioner:" (a) knowledge of self, (b) knowledge of the milieu of teaching, (c) knowledge of subject matter, (d) knowledge of curriculum development, and (e) knowledge of instruction. These knowledge' base

or skills are important to address because they reflect teachers professionalism which in term and time will be reflected in the classroom.

Bilingual Special Teacher Education

Development of Bilingual Teacher Education

Since the passage of the 1968 Bilingual Education Act, a mandate for effective training of bilingual teachers has existed (Crawford, 1989; Flor Ada, 1986; Hamayan, 1990; Sosa, 1990; Soto, 1988; Tikunoff, 1983). Unlike the plethora of training programs and identified competencies existing for monolingual teachers, few training program models exist for bilingual teachers (Hamayan, 1990; Lemberger, 1992; Tikunoff, 1983). Not until 1989 did the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE, 1989) adopt professional standards for the preparation of bilingual teachers. These professional standards came about as a result of research generated by federally funded bilingual teacher training grants (Crawford, 1989).

While some models of bilingual teacher education emphasize the training of teachers in the utilization of the native language as a conduit to English-only instruction, others emphasize training teachers in English as a second language instruction over native language, and still others emphasize training in dual-language approaches. Yet almost all models emphasize the need for bilingual teacher education to include training in reflective practices (Baker, 1992; Crawford, 1989). This is probably best stated in NABE's (1989) professional standards of the preparation of bilingual teachers:

bilingual/multicultural coursework and curriculum should include, among other things: strategies for adapting curriculum into culturally meaningful units through self reflection . . . opportunities for developing critical thinking skills . . . procedures for identifying biases and deficiencies in existing curricula and strategies to modify the curriculum to better address student linguistic, cultural and developmental needs . . . opportunities to develop an ability to utilize inquiry/discovery techniques. (p. 8)

Consistent throughout the literature reviewed is the need for bilingual teacher education programs to engage bilingual teachers in developing their own theories of teaching, in understanding the nature of teacher decision making, and in developing strategies for critical self- awareness and self-evaluation.

The Need for Reflective Practice

The shift from training bilingual teachers in methods and materials of teaching to a process-oriented inquiry model is discussed by Hamayan (1990). Hamayan advocates bilingual teachers' involvement in their own professional development through inquiry processes, thereby facilitating professional growth, while making teachers aware of how they learn and what they value. A similar argument is made by Milk (1990) and Lemberger (1992), both of whom found that a critical need in the preparation of bilingual teachers is to

develop problem-solving activities so that they may make choices, which in turn will enable them to be effective teachers in any situation. Milk (1990) further discusses the importance of bilingual teachers using both the native language and English for problem-solving strategies. He argues that bilingual teachers should be encouraged to discuss how they feel about contemporary issues affecting bilingual education.

Furthermore, Flor Ada (1986), Cummins (1986), and Garcia (1991) suggest that communicative and critical thinking skills that serve to empower students can best be developed, in the case of dominated minorities, through the utilization of the child's first language. They indicate that in order for bilingual teachers to successfully impart this ability to their students, they themselves need to experience inquiry activities through their native language during their training. Finally, Milk et al. (1992) indicate that professional development of bilingual teachers should be characterized by (a) authentic dialogue over relevant content, (b) learning by doing, (c) ongoing collaboration, and (d) collective reflection over practice.

The concept of teacher as "cultural broker," as discussed by Van Fleet (1983), is in direct congruence with the role bilingual teachers play in working with culturally and linguistically different students. Van Fleet defines a cultural broker as the mainstream teacher working with nonmainstream students to make them part of the mainstream while ensuring equity. Among the many ways of performing this brokerage are by examining the content of the school curriculum, helping students value what teachers offer, and helping students believe they can succeed (Van Fleet, 1983).

The concept of cultural broker pervades throughout the professional literature of bilingual teacher education. Flor Ada (1986), Sieburth and Perez (1987), E. R. Clark and Milk (1983), Lemberger (1992), Chu and Levy (1988), and Darder et al. (1993) advocate that bilingual teachers undergo a process of critical questioning concerning their own interpersonal, social, and political issues unique to their struggles. This inquiry during their own training will encourage reflection as to their own pedagogy when working with bilingual children. Flor Ada (1986) calls this process of introspection "creative education." In a similar vein, Sieburth and Perez (1987) argue, as do Chu and Levy (1988), that bilingual teachers, whether consciously or subconsciously, are always arbitrating between two cultures. Furthermore, Wells (1994) advocates that teachers should radically rethink not only the school's curriculum, but the manner in which students engage with it. He suggests that if teachers are to encourage children to think critically about their lives, teachers have to be encouraged to do likewise. This is most appropriate for bilingual teachers who often work within school curricula that are based on far different values and beliefs than those of the bilingual, multicultural children whom they teach. In a similar vein, Dyson (1989, 1993) suggests that teachers need to become aware of the social forces that give rise to literacy. Dyson argues that schools are shared universes of children and teachers. Schools must have a sense of common purpose for all their constituents. To that end, teachers must acknowledge the language and social resources of the children they serve and use these as resources for learning and literacy. Teachers must also carefully examine the school's curriculum to measure its relevancy to the lives of the children it serves.

Yet, the above researchers state that many bilingual teachers are never trained beyond the basics of providing instruction in the native language as a

means for bilingual students to enter "mainstream" English classes. In other words, bilingual teachers need to critically examine their role at the interpersonal level so that they may question and disregard, where appropriate, conventional modes about the goals and modes of teaching bilingual students.

Another pervasive need in the professional literature of bilingual teacher education is the need for bilingual teachers to discuss affective issues concerning bilingual education and the role of bilingual teachers in advocating for their field. Lemberger (1992), Baker (1992), and Darder et al. (1993) report that bilingual teachers generally never discuss affective issues in their preparation. There is great emphasis placed on "teaching" methods, but little stress on interpersonal discussions concerning bilingual education and the role of bilingual teachers in advocating for their field.

It appears, then, that a need exists in bilingual teacher education to develop reflective qualities among bilingual teachers.

Teacher Education Activities That Encourage Reflective Practice

The literature suggests several activities that develop reflective qualities among teachers. There appears to be a consensus among all studies reviewed that journal writing, discussion of case studies, and teacher research are conducive to the development of reflective teacher qualities (L. Clark & Lambert, 1986; Flickinger & Ruddy, 1992; Martin, 1984; Richards, 1992).

The literature further indicates that, regardless of where the reflective activities take place, they need to be conducted systematically over a period of time. In other words, the activities need to be conducted in the context of a deliberate procedure, not in isolation, and time needs to be set aside to conduct such activity.

Journal Writing

Writing enhances thinking in various ways. We write to remember details, communicate our feelings with others, and certainly to help clarify thinking and emotions (Stover & Vocke, 1992). Teacher-kept journals of their teaching practice have been widely used in the development of reflective qualities (Cochran Smith, 1991; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Newman, 1988; Sato et al., 1993; Stover & Vocke, 1992; Wedman & Martin, 1986; Wells, 1994). Journals put writers into a position to learn the following about themselves : (a) what they know, (b) what they feel, (c) what they do, and (d) why they do it (Wedman & Martin, 1986). They place practitioners in a position to reflect on their teaching.

Narrative and Story

Another writing activity conducive to practical inquiry and reflection, narrative and story, is concerned with how humans make meaning of experience by telling and retelling stories about themselves that both recreate the past and create purpose for the future (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). For any teacher, therefore, clues to why they do things could be found in their history, beliefs, values, and actions.

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Case Studies and Teacher Research

Gordon Wells (1994) describes a similar process for the development of reflective practices. Wells began exploring ways of infusing classroom-based inquiry as part of graduate level teacher-education courses at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He encouraged course members to investigate their own classrooms as a means of increasing reflection on their teaching practice. He eventually developed a course, "Action Research in Language and Learning," wherein teachers chose a topic of inquiry and brought issues, hunches, and experiences back to the college classroom for discussion. The materials the teachers brought back to the college course were in the form of transcripts of classroom talk, staffroom talk, and samples of students' writing. The entire college class would then engage in discussions and analyze the samples brought. Wells suggests change as a product of a process that begins with a new act based on personal theory leading to observation, then interpretation. Over the years, this course encouraged a community of inquiry.

Central to Wells' course is the opportunity for classroom members to "conference." The term conferencing refers to describing the talk that occurs around the composition of students' written texts (Graves, 1983). Children are encouraged to discuss their writing with each other as a means of refining it. Teachers, on the other hand, gain insights into the children's writing process by virtue of "listening" or reading about the children's discussions. The concept of conferencing could be extended to teachers talking about their own teaching as a means of reflection.

Contrastively, but not as formalized, using case studies as the classroom is an activity suggested by Van Manen (1977). Since all levels of reflectivity require a state of doubt, he recommends presenting teachers with a contrived "state of doubt" in the form of a vignette or simulated classroom event or case study. He further indicates that the case study must be presented in such a way that a person can make inferences, examine those inferences in light of prior experience and beliefs, and evaluate alternatives in an attempt at resolving the issue or doubt posed by the case study.

Bilingual teachers play a major role in the assimilation process of culturally diverse children. Bilingual teachers need to carefully consider what and how they teach. Research indicates that reflection is an ongoing process whereby teachers are constantly involved in evaluation of their teaching; the evaluation is formative and emphasizes judgment over evaluation rating. Finally, there are various activities that promote reflection: (a) keeping of teaching journals, (b) narrative and story, and (c) teacher research/case study analysis.

Conclusion

The exceptional child population of United State's schools continues to increase in its diversity. Inherent in that diversity, are various ways of getting and processing information. Research indicates that the greater the mis-match between the home and school culture, the greater the need for schools

to adapt their curricula to meet the unique needs of exceptional bilingual students.

Schools of Education have not been able to effectively train teachers in the delivery of instruction to bilingual exceptional students. Although several states have begun efforts to develop graduate level programs in bilingual special education, in an effort to lessen the shortage of bilingual exceptional teachers, a major need still exists to align the training of bilingual special education teachers to what the research indicates.

This paper was an attempt at providing teacher educators involved in the education of bilingual special education teachers with a framework for program development. It identified competencies needed by bilingual special education teachers. Additionally,, it discussed the need for reflective practice in the education of bilingual special education teachers. Finally, it suggested activities which teacher educators could implement as ways of developing reflective practice among bilingual special education teachers.

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